1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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754 to attempt to have anyone sing it for me, since it was too dangerous and would be likely to kill me. This was said even by the men who were willing and anxious to demonstrate the sorcery which removed the soul by the opening of the heart.

If a man who has sung another suddenly changes his mind and wishes to save him, he can swim out into the water at daylight, wash himself, return to the shore, and paint himself with red ocher. But it is insisted that if the singer did not swim and paint himself his victim would surely die. According to the natives the far-off country to the south is where all the people sing this death magic against the men of the north. This region to the south is no definite place. It is here "that stones walk like men." "These stones walk around and sing these songs, and men follow and listen and learn them and sing them and make the men in the north sick."

One of the most deadly songs is the whitefish song. The breath of its victim comes rapidly and very hard, which means that the fish has eaten out the insides of the person. The tide regulates the time of the death. When it comes in, the victim becomes extremely ill, his heart beats very fast, and everyone says, "Who has done this and who has sung this song?" When the tide goes out again, the person becomes a little stronger, and when it has reached its lowest ebb he feels almost normal. As the tide comes in the victim becomes sicker and continues to grow weaker until at full tide he dies.

753 754 Balliman's sister was very ill with bronchial pneumonia. Everyone knew she had been "sung" by the whitefish song because she continued to expectorate and vomit. When she became sick the tide was well in; when it went out she got better. Ultimately, in spite of this extremely strong magic, she recovered. During the crisis there was talk about everyone's being forced to go in swimming in order that the old men could see who had done the singing by observing those who refused to go in: they would be guilty. Nothing came of the talk. Although the woman was supposed to die from this powerful magic and everyone was certain she had been sung, there seemed to be no criticism of the belief after it had failed to operate.

926 828 732 *Possession by a Mokoi.*—The Murngin believe that deafness, dumbness, and insanity are due to possession of the afflicted one by a mokoi. Other illnesses are also caused by the entrance of a mokoi into the head of the victim. There were two deaf and dumb men in the group, one of them a near imbecile, the other mentally normal. The first had to be watched and taken care of by all the others in order to remain

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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alive, while the second provided for himself and was treated like any other man except that he talked and was spoken to by a sign language. The relatives of these two assume that mokois had entered their heads and that some day they would be led out into the bush, where someone would steal their souls, for "plenty of crazy men have been killed that way." It is thought that when these men were babies a dog had walked over the body of the more normal one a few times but had then been kicked out of the way; while the dog had walked over the other one several times, thus making him much more insane. "That one [the normal one]," said his brother, "when he was a baby a dog walked over him once and maybe twice. That made it so he couldn't hear or talk. I think that other one had a dog walk over him five or six times before his mother kicked that dog. I think that when the mother of that first boy kicked that dog he yelped and that is the reason he is not silly like that other crazy man. That other dog just went 'Unh' and didn't call out, and that is the reason his head is no good."

Image Whipping.—Another form of magic is to draw an image and then go over the whole of the body, naming each part and using the name of the intended victim. The image is then whipped with strings. This will cause a man's body to rot to pieces, and it is supposed to have killed several men among the various tribes in northeastern Arnhem Land.

Dreaming and Magic.—A bad dream can also cause sickness. Dreams of an open grave, of a recently dead man, or of the totemic emblem are among those which cause a man to rise from his sleep, build up his fire, put a branch of green leaves in the fire until it is smoking, brush himself off, and, if it seems to have been a particularly unpleasant dream, brush off the members of his immediate family.

Excretion and Magic.—There is a certain amount of fear among the Murngin that excreta or waste food products will be picked up by an enemy sorcerer and used to inflict sickness upon them. The belief, however, is not very strong, since no great care is exercised to hide this matter so that it cannot be used by the sorcerers. A man, however, before urinating or defecating, digs a hole and squats over it. He is seldom seen standing while urinating. Women squat too, but when in the bush put their hands on their knees and bend their knees slightly while remaining partially upright.

If there is a particular fear of magic, fish bones, kangaroo bones,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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CHAPTER SIX

From Hand to Mouth

Aborigines have lived from hand to mouth for centuries, but it is a wonder that any human being can live in Arnhem Land and find enough to eat. Though the Reserve covers 34,000 square miles, an average white man would perish in it if he were not rescued by a Stone Age man. On the other hand an aboriginal family, isolated many miles from its hunting-grounds, can calmly grind hardwood into hunting spears and digging-sticks, make fire by twirling one stick against another, find water, erect a shelter to suit the weather conditions, and make a comfortable camp.

Iniji, an aboriginal boy of eleven years, was inadvertently abandoned on a barren island near Yirrkala when his horde divided forces and went away in their canoes. Iniji was deformed and had difficulty in hobbling, yet he kept himself alive for over a month by crawling along the beach for turtle eggs and shellfish. For moisture he manipulated long grass straws far under a low cliff face and sucked the only fresh water on the island.

Contrary to popular belief, aboriginal foods are mainly of vegetable origin, although they also eat animals, birds, fish, and reptiles. For countless centuries, Stone Age hunters have tested roots, yams, berries, animals, birds, fish, reptiles, and shellfish, and numerous deaths have resulted from poisoning, yet they have perfected methods of treatment. They have also evolved an astonishingly efficient digestive system, and also jaws and teeth that bend wire and small iron bars into spears, and nails into fish-hooks.

Most of the forty varieties of yams found in the Reserve